



HEPATITIS C VIRUS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is the most common chronic bloodborne viral infection in the United States.
- About 1% of the non-institutionalized people in the United States (2.7 million) is chronically infected with HCV. Many of these persons are not aware of their infections and are not clinically ill.
- Direct exposure to blood poses the highest risk for HCV transmission. Injection drug users account for the largest number of infected persons; 60% to 80% of persons who have injected drugs for 5 years or more are infected with HCV.
- Cirrhosis of the liver develops in 10% to 20% of persons with chronic hepatitis C over 20 to 30 years, and liver cancer develops in 1% to 5%.
- Chronic liver disease is the 10th leading cause of death among adults in the United States. An estimated 40% to 60% of chronic liver disease is due to hepatitis C.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC currently supports the following:

- Cooperative agreements with 50 states and large metropolitan areas to create hepatitis C coordination activities that will help lead to the integration of viral hepatitis counseling, testing, referral, and surveillance into existing public health programs.
- Cooperative agreements with 17 state and local health departments to evaluate the delivery of viral hepatitis prevention counseling and testing, referral, and education in sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, drug treatment, and correctional healthcare settings.
- 12 cooperative agreements with nongovernmental organizations to develop and disseminate hepatitis information and education materials to the general public and groups at high-risk of infection.
- 7 demonstration sites to evaluate strategies for states to implement chronic viral hepatitis infection surveillance.
- A population-based study of the etiology of and trends in chronic liver disease in the United States.

CDC also has published guidelines for collecting and reporting information about persons with chronic HCV; laboratory testing and reporting of HCV antibody results; and prevention and control of infections with hepatitis viruses in correctional settings. CDC recently distributed the *Hepatitis C Toolkit*, which contains educational material for physicians and their patients, to a test population of 140,000 physicians.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue to support state and local hepatitis C coordination activities; help translate lessons learned from the demonstration projects to state and local health programs; develop and provide training to healthcare professionals; improve and expand surveillance for HCV infection and chronic liver disease at national and state levels; evaluate the progress of notifying transfusion recipients who received blood from donors who later tested positive for HCV; determine the need for additional studies or recommendations to prevent perinatal and sexual transmission; and assist corrections health programs with ways to address the prevention and control of HCV infection in prison populations.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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